

GPAC Meeting #18

Summary

January 17, 2023



Introduction

On January 17, 2023, the City of Ventura convened the 18th meeting of the General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC). The purpose of the meeting was to: 1) review and discuss the survey results; 2) discuss how the GPAC would work together to develop a preferred land use map based on community input; and 3) discuss additional engagement.

The meeting was open to the public and held in person in the Community Room at City Hall. The meeting was livestreamed on [YouTube](#). This document summarizes the key content presented and themes discussed.

Meeting Participants

The following participants attended the meeting:

General Plan Team

- Matt Raimi, Raimi + Associates
- Lilly Nie, Raimi + Associates
- Neda Zayer, City of Ventura

GPAC Members

- Doug Halter, GPAC Chair (previously GPAC Vice Chair)*
- Bill McReynolds, GPAC Vice Chair (previously GPAC member)*
- Philip Bohan, GPAC
- Nicholas Bonge, GPAC
- Lorrie Brown, GPAC (previously GPAC Chair)*
- Stephanie Caldwell, GPAC
- David Comden, GPAC
- Kyler Carson, GPAC
- Joshua Damigo, GPAC
- Peter Freeman, GPAC
- Kacie Goff, GPAC
- Kelsey Jonker, GPAC
- Stephanie Karba, GPAC
- Erin Kraus, GPAC
- Louise Lampara, GPAC
- Daniel Reardon, GPAC
- Sabrena Rodriguez, GPAC
- Alejandra Tellez, GPAC
- Dana Worsnop, GPAC

Absent: Nicholas Deitch, Scott McCarty

**Due to recent changes in City Council leadership, Doug Halter is now the GPAC Chair and Bill McReynolds the GPAC Vice Chair. Lorrie Brown will now serve as a general member of the committee.*

Meeting Format

Neda Zayer welcomed GPAC members and the public to the 18th GPAC meeting. Matt Raimi followed with an overview of the meeting agenda and a summary of the direction heard from the November meeting, where GPAC members identified a process to work in small groups to conduct additional engagement and develop land use recommendations in the winter and spring of 2023. He then presented the General Plan Team's high-level conclusions and observations from the land use alternatives survey results. After Matt's review of the survey results, GPAC members had the opportunity to discuss their key takeaways and outstanding questions from the survey. Following this discussion session, Matt presented a set of recommended outcomes, proposed schedule, and expectations for engagement based on the direction provided to the General Plan Team at the November GPAC meeting. GPAC members discussed these suggestions as a large group and proposed alternative ideas for this next phase of work. The meeting concluded with public comment.

GPAC Discussion: Survey Results

At the November meeting, GPAC members requested that the General Plan Team provide their insights on the land use alternative survey results. At the January meeting, Matt summarized common themes seen throughout both the surveys and engagement activities and provided a high-level summary of key takeaways for each geographic area. Following the overview of the survey results, GPAC members had the opportunity to ask questions, identify areas where they felt there was consensus in land use direction, and discuss areas where they still had outstanding questions after reviewing the survey results. Below is a summary of their questions and comments.

Questions

- **How does the resubmittal of the Housing Element impact the conversation around land use alternatives?**
 - The Housing Element will be running on its own timeline for certification. Although the General Plan Team does not foresee any drastic changes to the Housing Element, the City will monitor both the Housing Element and land use alternatives to ensure they align with each other.
- **When we talk about "changes in density" in different geographies, are we referring to changes in residential density, daytime population density, employment density, etc.?**
 - We are referring to changes in density in land use designations, with a focus on changes to residential density (in dwelling units per acre).
- **Why were the SOAR areas considered in the alternatives, if there is a clear consensus to preserve agricultural uses?**
 - The purpose of the land use alternatives is to test out different ideas. Although the direction on SOAR areas may be clear, the General Plan Team heard enough feedback about considering SOAR for development to warrant including the idea in the alternatives and surveys. Excluding the idea would mean disregarding input from an entire segment of the population.
- **I noticed a lot of identical or nearly identical written comments in the survey results. Is this a common occurrence in other surveys?**

- The identical or nearly identical comments are likely caused by campaigns that mobilized people to answer questions in a certain way. People use campaigns to advocate for what they believe in, and this is a common practice seen in many other places. Alternatively, it could be that identical answers are because one individual took the survey multiple times. However, the survey was limited to one response per IP address.

Observations and Comments

- We need to have more nuanced discussions about land use. For example, in Downtown, there is a difference between whether people will accept taller heights in new developments or developments that complement the area's historic ambience. It is also important to examine the benefits and costs between different land use directions. While maintaining SOAR helps preserve agriculture in the city, it also comes with pesticide use and dust. We also need more engagement with the younger generation.
- None of the subareas should be excluded from GPAC discussion. We should discuss the future of SOAR under both existing conditions and the hypothetical scenario where development was to be allowed.

GPAC Discussion: Sub-Group Work

At the November GPAC meeting, the GPAC provided direction that they wanted to work in smaller groups to conduct additional engagement and develop a recommended land use map that could be reviewed by the full GPAC. The GPAC identified a timeline between January and April to conduct this additional work. Based on this direction, the General Plan Team put together a suggested process, schedule, and list of outcomes needed from this phase of engagement so that GPAC members could ultimately feel comfortable developing land use recommendations for the city. These were summarized in a "Sub-Group Instructions" document attached to the January GPAC Letter and presented at this meeting.

At the January meeting, several GPAC members expressed concern that this proposed process was a heavy lift with unrealistic deadlines and that the expectations were outside the scope of the GPAC's identified role. Given this feedback, the discussion pivoted to GPAC members suggesting alternative ideas for reviewing the survey, conducting additional engagement, and developing land use recommendations. The direction agreed to by the GPAC at this meeting is detailed below:

- Between now and April, the GPAC will review the survey results together as a large group and develop recommendations for land use direction in each geographic area. The GPAC decided that they did not want to meet offline in small groups or between meetings. They also decided that every GPAC member should review all the survey and engagement results, rather than identifying a few people to review each geographic area and provide a summary to the full GPAC.
- The GPAC will meet at a cadence more frequent than once a month (i.e., twice a month) to discuss all the geographic areas. The General Plan Team will send out a Doodle poll to see people's availability and schedule the next few meetings.
- During these meetings, the GPAC will identify any outstanding questions that may require additional input from the public after April. The engagement could include tapping into GPAC

members' personal and professional networks where appropriate to conduct additional engagement (*the exact timing and methods of engagement will require further discussion*).

- The overall goal of this effort will be to create a consensus on a land use designation map. The map will be at a parcel level and prepared by the General Plan Team. Note that some specific areas may have multiple land use concepts presented if the GPAC cannot agree on a single direction.

The GPAC also made suggestions for conducting additional engagement. The ideas are listed below, but no decision was made on how engagement should occur during this next phase of work.

- GPAC members can be a conduit for engagement, but the General Plan Team should lead and facilitate any engagement that occurs.
- GPAC engagement should be facilitated in a consistent manner to ensure that everyone is obtaining quality data.
- GPAC should identify underrepresented groups in the survey and develop a citywide strategy to get feedback from those individuals. Part of the engagement should not be focused on any specific area but rather should be for demographic groups across the entire city.
- The City should consider holding GPAC meetings in the community, in locations outside of City Hall (i.e., churches, schools).
- The General Plan Team should work with GPAC members to set up meetings with their personal or professional networks. Staff can give presentations and facilitate discussion.
- Outstanding questions could go out to the public in the form of a second survey. They should be specific questions targeted to different population groups.

Public Comments

Several individuals spoke during public comment at the close of each meeting. Comments are summarized below.

- Consider putting up banners throughout the city to advertise GPU engagement events. If GPAC subgroups are formed to conduct additional engagement in the community, ensure they all use a common set of questions.
- Outside of land use, we also need to focus on how to move people more efficiently and encouraging business growth in the city.
- One way to better reach the community is for GPAC meetings to be held in other locations. Avoid using planning jargon. Our end goal is to have the majority of the public embrace this plan.
- We need a more reliable and statistically valid data source. The land use alternatives survey should have used quota sampling based on council districts.
- Midtown residents do support growth, as long as we are maintaining the current zoning and mix of uses. If the GPAC members do conduct additional engagement, they should track whether residents are participating for the first time or have engaged in previous GPU activities.
- It is disrespectful to the survey respondents to completely disregard or throw out the survey results. There should have been a process to validate the survey results through IP or email addresses. Reach out to more groups such as school PTO boards.